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President: Mr. Neil (Vice-President) ..... (Jamaica)

Contents

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (*continued*)

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Neil, Vice-President, took the chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council (*continued*) (A/59/85-E/2004/68)

Mr. Owuor (Kenya), after endorsing the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, emphasized that in order to guarantee reliability of development cooperation, and its adaptability to countries' priorities, its underlying principles of universality and neutrality had to be strengthened. Remarking that operational activities were determined not by demand or by country priorities but by supply, because core resources had not increased as much as non-core, he called for efforts to be redoubled to mobilize resources, particularly core resources.

Kenya, which had been one of the first countries to participate in the exercise of simplification and harmonization of the operational activities, laid stress on the need to reduce the number of policy documents at national level as well as the reporting requirements on the programme countries. Policy documents and bilateral programmes should be dovetailed, taking into account countries' priorities, the Millennium Development Goals and other commitments undertaken in United Nations conferences and summits. At the regional level, instruments such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and its subprogrammes should serve as the framework for development cooperation. In addition, in order to reduce the resources and time taken up by seminars, workshops and studies, Kenya suggested that attention should be focused on tangible and specific projects having a direct impact on the beneficiaries.

Finally, the Government of Kenya was doing everything in its power to guarantee the safety of the United Nations personnel, upon whom the success of development cooperation activities depended.

Mr. Mirafazal (Islamic Republic of Iran) endorsed the statement of the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China and pointed out that the global environment had changed enormously, with growing differences in income both from one country to another and within the same country. That was placing new difficulties in the way of United Nations funds and programmes. Nevertheless, the eradication of poverty had to remain the major pillar of the operational activities of the United Nations, which could perform an important function of support to capacity-building. Here, special importance attached to technology transfer. Creation of capacities at national level was essential, with a view to promoting full participation by national governments and all relevant actors in all stages of the operational activities. It had to be ensured that countries felt ownership of the programmes and projects; consequently, beneficiary countries needed to participate fully at every stage of them, including design, execution, monitoring and evaluation. For its part, if sustained economic growth and sustainable development were to be achieved, the United Nations had to provide the countries with technical assistance appropriate to their economic and social needs and priorities.

Iran welcomed the general trend towards mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the operational activities of the United Nations, as well as the rising gender balance in appointments, both at Headquarters and in the field, with account also being taken of North-South balance and the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

The Islamic Republic of Iran had always underlined the role of the United Nations system in mainstreaming South-South cooperation as a complement to North-South cooperation. South-South cooperation could contribute to the dissemination of best practices and promote indigenous knowledge and technologies in the countries of the South.

Iran considered that, in the light of the discussions in other forums, the concepts of "comprehensive and people-centred approaches" to development should be examined in detail before being incorporated in the triennial comprehensive policy review relating to operational activities for development. Also, Iran was opposed to the proposal to give official authority to the joint meetings of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme, since that ran counter to the process of harmonization and simplification.

Ms. Fleming (World Bank) observed that important progress had been made, such as the institution of the poverty reduction strategy process in low-income countries and the Johannesburg and Monterrey conferences. Despite the radical change which had occurred in the approach to development, which had opened the gates to closer cooperation among the agencies of the United Nations system, including the World Bank, the international community should not rest on its laurels but go on to tackle the new tasks facing it.

Firstly, it was necessary to develop a coherent, measurable and results-based approach, equipped with an effective means for monitoring and evaluating progress. Here, the importance of the Rome Declaration on Harmonization and the follow-up process needed to be stressed. That had the primary aim of improving countries' control over programmes and reducing the burden imposed on them by the innumerable reports and procedures and the diversity of rules. The developing countries should demand discipline from the donors, on the basis of their national development or poverty reduction strategy, to which the institutional plans of the various agencies and donors should be matched. In addition, the development outcomes should be widened, and by means of the collective expertise of the developing countries drawn from their own experience, a base of knowledge, technologies and innovative approaches should be created, so that they could execute the programmes effectively at national level. In this context, she drew attention to the meeting held in Shanghai, which had been a very important example of South-South cooperation.

The key challenge continued to be that of translating the growing interest, support and plans for harmonized and results-based development into real changes on the ground, such as would really advance the development of the country, by the country itself. The World Bank was optimistic and confident that the next triennial comprehensive review would reveal positive advances in relation to the tasks that were still ahead.

Ms. Evans (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that, since its origins in 1919, the federation to which she belonged had grown to encompass national organizations in practically all countries and almost 100 million volunteers throughout the world, making it a truly global organization with an unprecedented humanitarian potential. Collaborating with other actors to protect vulnerable populations and meet their needs, the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and their volunteers also tried to improve economic and social conditions worldwide and, in association with the United Nations system, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Communicable diseases caused around 13 million preventable deaths every year. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) supported enhancement of disease-fighting methods and improvement of service delivery, and took the view that greater attention must be paid to promoting demand for disease control programmes: communities and individuals needed to know about, want and obtain the services that they needed. For that purpose, the IFRC had prepared active programmes intended to improve the capacity of the national societies and their associates. That was an essential part of the Federation's work, and deserved to be better known and to receive greater attention from governments and international organizations.

The IFRC considered that a national development agenda could not be valid if it did not pay detailed and structured attention to the priorities in the area of health, for which reason the IFRC and its national societies were increasingly participating in partnerships to combat the primary public health problems. Of particular significance here were the programmes of prevention and eradication of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and poliomyelitis. Special mention should be made of the mass vaccination campaigns against measles in which the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies had been involved since 2001. With the assistance of 50 000 volunteers working on mobilization of society, logistics and follow-up, to date more than 125 million African children had been vaccinated in 25 countries; by the end of 2005, the children vaccinated would number more than 200 million, which would mean that several hundreds of thousands of deaths every year would be avoided. Those efforts in the fight against measles had made it possible to accelerate other interventions, such as the prevention of malaria in pregnant women and the under-fives through the distribution of insecticide-treated nets.

As an international network with a unique bridge-building function, the IFRC considered that

Governments should proactively acknowledge the value of the broader engagement of civil society and non-governmental organizations in partnerships for development. Relatedly, the IFRC also stressed the importance to its work of collaboration with the private sector, in particular with the pharmaceuticals and foodstuffs producers. Together with active participation by the volunteers, those partnerships were essential for the sustainability of the interventions in the area of public health, which, when linked to the work of Governments at all levels, made it possible to improve the health of the most vulnerable population, as well as offering tangible progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Finally, it was to be hoped that the Economic and Social Council would adopt decisions incorporating the Agenda for Humanitarian Action, approved at the International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent in December 2003, into the working processes of the United Nations system, in particular in the operational activities area.

Mr. Balarezo (Peru), after endorsing the statement of the Group of 77 and China, said that the multilateral system of the United Nations performed an essential role in the mobilization of international development cooperation. Consequently, it should be strengthened and constantly adapted to the challenges posed by the 21st century. That made it indispensable that the funds and programmes of the United Nations should be provided with predictable and stable financial resources, in particular core resources, to ensure the multilateral, neutral and universal character of the operational activities of the United Nations.

Peru welcomed the substantial improvements introduced with the reforms of recent years, intended to promote greater internal coordination, and reiterated its support for that process, recognizing the role which the United Nations Development Group had played in that area. However, Peru also considered it regrettable that the Secretary-General's report did not identify clearly the difficulties on the ground in achieving the objectives set forth in General Assembly resolution 56/201.

Despite the progress achieved in the common country assessments (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), there were still not sufficient data to evaluate their real effect in the countries, since their advantages could not be measured in cost-benefit terms, and the linkage with other evaluations and with the poverty reduction strategies was very fluid. A more thorough analysis should be undertaken, and alternatives should be sought for aligning with other processes, always taking as a base the countries' priorities and policies. It was essential to avoid duplication and to reduce the transaction costs entailed for the beneficiary country. Peru welcomed the reforms in the selection and engagement of the Resident Coordinators and the in-country teams, which were fundamental components in the mobilization of international resources.

One of the most disquieting topics continued to be that of funding for the cooperation activities of the United Nations system, since it was insufficient both in relation to the needs of the developing countries and relative to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; in addition, it was unpredictable, unstable and dependent on just a few donors. In this connection, the delegation of Peru stressed the need to evaluate objectively the multi-year funding frameworks and to examine other funding processes.

Peru welcomed the progress achieved with respect to the process of harmonization and simplification, pointing out that it was essential that no additional costs should be generated. That process was fundamental for the middle-income counties, in which cooperation was based fundamentally on cofinanced projects, which meant that the release of resources would result in greater investments in development.

South-South cooperation was of particular interest to Peru, which regretted that the Secretary-General's report did not contain more information on the measures adopted by the United Nations to incorporate technical cooperation between developing countries into its programmes and projects on a generalized basis. The few examples given appeared to be somewhat isolated cases.

In the view of Peru, the operational activities of the United Nations system were fundamental and had to be based on being universally available to recipient countries and on the need to be responsive to the development objectives and plans of the countries themselves.

Mr. Francis (Jamaica), after endorsing the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that in order to utilize as far as possible the possibilities for the

United Nations system to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the discussions in the triennial comprehensive review needed to be guided by the following principles: (1) analysis of the operational activities of the United Nations should not be restricted to evaluating only the progress achieved in coordination and coherence, but should also cover progress in the extent to which the system carried out the programmes and provided assistance; (2) as a priority, examination was needed of the fact that complex operations were still being carried out on the ground involving overlap and duplication of activities, which impeded the search for new sources of funding in the donor community; (3) greater emphasis should be placed on increasing the impact of the programmes and carrying out the ongoing reforms efficiently; (4) operational activities had to be guided at all times by the development priorities and strategies of national Governments, and the use of instruments such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) had to contribute to achieving full country ownership and avoid the imposition of conditions; (5) the United Nations had to have the resources necessary to achieve its development functions. While welcoming the reforms undertaken to improve coherence and coordination within the United Nations system, including the new simplification and harmonization instruments, Jamaica pointed out that the latter did not guarantee the general simplification of the processes. The procedures for the presentation of reports on the outcomes imposed an additional burden on Governments and on the United Nations system. Jamaica took note of the efforts expended to link the simplification and harmonization of the operational activities of the United Nations system to those of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development but pointed out that the operational activities should not be directed totally by the procedures of that committee.

It was necessary to improve the processes of the common country evaluation and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, which were still increasing the administrative burden and transaction costs. It must be ensured that resources were assigned as a basic principle to the implementation of the programmes, not to unnecessarily complex administrative tasks. It was necessary to resolve wide-ranging economic questions such as growth, development and poverty reduction, in order to ensure a more integrated approach to development. Jamaica called on the specialized agencies to contribute to the process, focusing on questions such as trade, globalization and investment flows. In that context, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) should play a fundamental role.

Similarly, it was necessary to strengthen the Resident Coordinator system so that it would attract all of the resources and the technical competence necessary to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The increase in the number of instruments made the work of the Resident Coordinators more complex, and in consequence it was necessary not to overload the system and to ensure that the mechanisms and instruments of coordination were sufficiently simple and rational for them to have the greatest effect. The triennial comprehensive review would make it possible to simplify joint programming and create a mechanism to reduce competition for projects and resources, in particular extra-budgetary resources. Jamaica urged the relevant agencies to adopt measures in support of the establishment of United Nations Houses and the strengthening of common services, so as to improve coordination.

In order for the funds and programmes to operate effectively, a balance had to be struck between the contributions for core and non-core resources. The recently introduced multi-year funding modalities of some agencies could bring greater predictability. Also, a more thorough examination should be undertaken of the possibility of establishing a system of quotas to finance the United Nations' development cooperation activities. Finally, the option of creating partnerships between public and private sector entities should not be a substitute for the provision of official development assistance in its traditional form, since many developing countries lacked the resources needed to play a significant part in collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Mr. Ivanou (Belarus) said that the Republic of Belarus recognized the important role of the operational activities carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and other agencies with the aim of guaranteeing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and creating the conditions for dealing with the needs, both socioeconomic and other,

of the developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Belarus, as a future member of the Executive Boards of three organizations in the United Nations system, namely UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, intended to do everything possible to promote the basic principles of the operational activities for development. Reform of the United Nations system of operational activities had to be actively pursued, with the aim of increasing efficiency and taking greater account of the interests of the developing countries.

The delegation of Belarus urged the funds and programmes of the United Nations to adopt new measures to guarantee a level of core resources in line with the scale of the activities and the needs of the recipient countries. It expressed its concern at the current imbalance between the core resources of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF and the non-core resources assigned to specific projects. Non-core resources, the mobilization of which was often subject to the interests of the donors, should not be allowed to substitute for core resources. Belarus welcomed the fact that UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF were using a strategy to establish medium-term programmes, as well as financial instruments such as multi-year funding modalities and other medium-term plans. Strategic management was achieved by way of complex analysis and planning, within a sole instrument, of the objectives of the programme work, the financial resources needed for implementation and the outcomes expected, as well as the monitoring and application of the instruments' principal provisions by the Executive Boards of the funds and programmes. Application at national level of the common country assessment and the UNDAF would make it possible to strengthen the financial basis of the operational activities and to improve efficiency. Belarus urged that greater use should be made of those two instruments. The coherence of the instruments would guarantee that due account was taken of the interests of the recipient countries. In those countries where the common country assessment was not currently used, and where UNDAF did not exist either, the basic strategic programme had to be the national framework for cooperation.

Belarus drew the attention of UNDP, as the agency directing the Resident Coordinator system, to the need to achieve a better balance between candidates from the donor and the recipient countries, when appointing the Resident Coordinators. One of the basic criteria had to be that the person should be knowledgeable both about the global problems of development and about the national needs and the socioeconomic priorities of the country in which he or she was going to work.

The creation of partnerships between UNDP, UNICEF and other agencies carrying out operational activities with the international financial institutions increased the potential for guaranteeing financial resources intended for priority assistance projects, such as for example, the eradication of poverty, the fight against HIV/AIDS and the rehabilitation and protection of the environment.

The Government of Belarus reiterated its interest in continuing to maintain close and productive cooperation with the funds and programmes of the United Nations in the context of the goals and targets set forth in the Millennium Declaration, taking into account the specific problems of the countries with economies in transition. It expressed the hope of establishing a constructive collaboration with various groups of States during the current segment in order to reach agreement on a new resolution covering the triennial comprehensive policy review as it related to operational activities for development.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia) expressed the view that the triennial comprehensive review had inspired and assisted developing countries to pursue their national priorities and needs in relation to poverty eradication and sustainable economic growth. Development cooperation within the United Nations framework had contributed significantly to translating the global development agenda into national terms. The legitimacy of the United Nations system in the eyes of all national stakeholders and its effective contribution to their efforts had helped to bring about national consensus on comprehensive development.

While recognizing that there was a linkage between development and peace, and the increasing attention being paid to operational activities for crisis prevention and recovery, the delegation of Indonesia stressed that those activities should not be pursued to the detriment of the development programmes. The United Nations system had to adhere to the basic values and characteristics of its operational activities, namely universality, multilateralism and flexibility. Further simplification and harmonization procedures

were required for operational activities in the field, with that goal being pursued in full consultation and cooperation with the programme country. Procedures had to be adapted to the needs of the developing countries in order to assist in integrating the assistance provided by the system into the national development processes of programme countries.

A positive trend could be observed towards an increase in the funding of the operational activities of the United Nations system and an enhancement of the programming focus of the agencies within the system. However, achieving the Millennium Development Goals would require continuous, predictable and assured funding in the future. The Government of Indonesia was firmly convinced that the donor community should provide sufficient funding for the operational activities of the United Nations to be carried out on a stable and reliable basis. It needed to be emphasized that such funding should be provided without conditions, so that the recipient countries could succeed in achieving their legitimate development objectives.

Technical assistance should be further enhanced within the operational activities of the United Nations through capacity-building programmes carried out within the framework of South-South cooperation. To that end, the United Nations system could facilitate triangular cooperation by pooling the expertise of the developing countries, together with the financial support of the developed countries. However, support to South-South cooperation should not replace, but complement, the cooperation between North and South within the framework of the United Nations system, the neutrality of which qualified it to perform a critical role in development cooperation. Partnerships should be established with bilateral and multilateral agencies because they increased the capacity of the system to service the needs of the developing countries.

Mr. Briz Gutiérrez (Guatemala), after associating himself fully with the statement made by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, noted that the discussions on the operational activities of the United Nations system were focused, as in earlier years, on the inadequacies in core resources and in particular in the lack of confidence that the multi-year financing forecasts would be fulfilled. The delegation of Guatemala hoped that the current year's triennial comprehensive review would make it possible to lay the groundwork for a programme which would result in a more robust quantity of core resources. He was confident that the positive news on the increase in the core resources achieved by the Administrator of UNDP reflected not only the progress achieved in the process of reform, but also the tacit and generalized recognition of the comparative advantages of the United Nations over other sources of official cooperation, arising out of its impartiality, lack of conditionality, presence on the ground and capacity to take on the priorities of the recipient country. All of those factors confirmed that the Organization had to take on a leading role not only in setting strategic and policy guidelines but also as a trusted partner of the Member States. In that regard, UNICEF was a model to follow. It was important that the efforts initiated by UNDP in rationalizing its presence in the field should continue. In order to carry out the comprehensive development agenda in close cooperation with Governments, through the relevant ministries, the system as a whole had to be represented on the ground in strength and in unity.

Guatemala considered that, despite the ongoing improvement in coordination and cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, and in particular between UNDP and the World Bank, there was still a need for a greater commitment on the part of all the organizations in the United Nations system carrying out operational activities to collaborate and participate effectively in the reforms. Finally, he expressed his support for the work carried out by the United Nations Volunteer Programme and observed with interest the consultations being held with the United Nations Capital Development Fund with a view to empowering its activities in the spheres of local development, microfinancing and support to small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Mr. Laurin (Canada) considered that a strong multilateral system was required to underpin programme countries as they tackled the Millennium Development Goals. To that end, the United Nations Resident Coordinator system required continued strengthening. That included reinforcement of United Nations country teams with both human and financial resources, which would enable the Organization to create United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks that had a clear accountability trail and properly-delegated authority, which in turn would allow system-wide decision-making at the country level in the interests of improved alignment with the

country's own poverty reduction strategy or equivalent national plan.

The coordination segment of the Council had given Member States an opportunity to reflect on the importance of a gender equality approach. The Resident Coordinator system should be accountable for mainstreaming a gender perspective into country-level analysis and advocacy, programmes and operational activities, and in particular CCA/UNDAF documents. That in turn would lead to a more systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data, as well as to better integration of gender-sensitive reporting into existing monitoring and evaluation processes within the United Nations system.

While much progress had been made on harmonization and simplification, much still remained to be done. It was encouraging that the funds and programmes now produced an UNDAF with shared results matrix, but it was necessary for them to move beyond joint programming to joint programmes. United Nations Houses and common services also offered opportunities for greater coordination and reduced transaction and operating costs. UNDP or UNICEF could represent the smaller organizations at the country level.

The upcoming joint operational-humanitarian session on the transition from relief to development would be a step towards application of a more coherent approach in post-conflict countries, because more effective and systematic coordination of the United Nations' political, humanitarian, development and security activities could lead to better outcomes for the people affected by conflict.

Canada welcomed efforts to clarify comparative advantages and improve working relations between the various United Nations funds and agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions and regional development banks. While they might in some cases have shared thematic interests, it was essential that their programming at the country level be both complementary and aligned with country priorities. Additionally, they must deliver coherent policy messages, particularly with regard to medium-term plans and the balance between financing the Millennium Development Goals, in particular pro-poor growth, and maintaining macroeconomic stability.

Canada recognized the need to increase global development assistance flows, and had committed to double its international assistance budget by 2010, as well as to attempt to improve the predictability and stability of its funding of multilateral institutions.

Mr. Penjo (Bhutan) associated himself with the statement made by the delegation of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said that the operational activities of the United Nations system must be responsive to the needs of the developing countries and be directed towards the appropriate application of the development agenda arising from the principal United Nations conferences and summits and, in particular, the Millennium Development Goals. Despite the efforts deployed by the United Nations system in that direction, the desired "unity of purpose and action" had not yet been achieved.

The United Nations should go on trying to promote and achieve the essential level of coordination, congruency and integration, should always take account of the situation of each country, and should uphold the principle of country ownership. Reinforcement of the operational activities of the United Nations system needed to be matched to national priorities and complement the existing national processes and mechanisms.

A fundamental question was that of appropriate and predictable funding for development activities. The reduction in official development assistance (ODA) was a cause for concern and had impacted the operational activities of the United Nations system in many countries. The recent increase in the level of funding was not sufficient to meet the internationally agreed development objectives. Bhutan welcomed the commitments undertaken in Monterrey for an increase in ODA and urged the international community to channel a part of that assistance towards the core resources for the operational activities of the United Nations funds and programmes. Without the necessary funding mechanisms, the United Nations system would not be able fully to perform the key role for which it was uniquely equipped. It was to be hoped that the funding question would be examined in detail, taking both a quantitative and a qualitative approach.

Despite more than five decades of international development cooperation, the world still saw poverty, hunger and disease. Even so, it had to be recognized that without the valuable contribution of the United Nations system the situation would be much worse. Given the linkage between peace and development in

an increasingly globalized world, today it was more important than ever that the United Nations system should have sufficient resources, the mandate and the direction to assist the developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Shapiro (United States of America) said that the triennial comprehensive review should be an opportunity to discuss both the policy objectives and operational effectiveness of the UN's development activities. It should also review current thinking among the international community and reflect the Monterrey Consensus as well as supporting its implementation. It would also be useful to review how the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the role of the United Nations in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers contributed to the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. The review should further examine how to enhance coordination through the common country assessment, UNDAF and PRSP processes.

Simplification and harmonization were important elements of effectiveness. The United States welcomed the suggestion by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Executive Committee that there should be further discussions on the role of joint boards of the funds and programmes.

The United States supported efforts to strengthen field cooperation among United Nations funds and programmes, to promote strategic coherence in their programme, to use common assessment and assistance tools where possible, and to achieve economies in service delivery. However, it had serious concerns over many aspects of what UNDG called "joint programmes" in which an intergovernmental oversight mechanism was either unclear or absent, making it difficult to ensure financial transparency and accountability to the donors for the use of their resources. If pooling of resources led to a lack of accountability, donor support for a well-run and trusted organization would be transformed into support for any and every organization that drew from those shared resources.

In order to maintain sufficient core funding it was important for the funds and programmes to retain donor confidence–particularly among non-governmental donors–that funds were spent for their intended purpose, as otherwise donors were likely to attach conditions to their contributions, leading to a shrinking core funding base.

The United States had historically supported efforts to reduce overlap between agencies and maximize programme impact through the available mechanisms. That required United Nations agencies to cooperate closely and to define clearly and focus on their own comparative advantages. While some countries saw collaboration as a step towards creating a single entity, the United States of America supported the system of distinct but interlocking mandates for United Nations agencies. The United States remained ready to collaborate with the funds and programme and with interested Member States in the spirit of enhancing the effectiveness of operational activities and addressing Member States' concerns.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia) said that the United Nations fulfilled an essential function in the achievement of sustainable development in the world, thanks to its unique capacity to build worldwide consensus around development goals and follow-up to those goals at country level. In that regard, the operational activities of the United Nations were a fundamental instrument. The triennial comprehensive policy review took on particular importance in the light of the review of progress in achieving the internationally agreed development agenda, in particular the Millennium Development Goals.

The Resident Coordinator system and United Nations Houses had made it possible to consolidate efforts and achieve greater cohesion, cooperation and coordination among the various United Nations agencies. However, it needed to be stressed that frequent changes in the Resident Coordinators, as had been the case in Armenia, affected the continuity and effectiveness of the work. Planning for the longer term would be preferable, with the aim that once familiarized with the various projects the Resident Coordinators could also follow up on their implementation.

Armenia welcomed the increase in coordination between the United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions but considered that further coordination and cooperation were needed at country level. The lack of regional cooperation and the regional aspect of the operational activities of the United Nations was a topic that deserved consideration. Countries could benefit from a greater degree of

collaboration with the regional commissions in cross-border and regional matters. Emphasis should be placed on the need for the regional consultation processes for the country teams, and the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations should be encouraged to incorporate the regional structures into their development cooperation work at the country level.

Another topic of major interest was country ownership of the development strategies, an indispensable requirement for effective development assistance. The objectives set out would be impossible to achieve without active participation by the government and civil society.

The United Nations country teams could fulfil a key function in boosting national capacity to establish transparent and efficient institutions making maximum use of internal and external resources, to promote participation by the public and to support enhancement of capacity in the work of monitoring and accountability.

Mr. Ayari (Tunisia), after endorsing the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the triennial comprehensive review was of extreme importance for evaluating the operation of the United Nations system at the country level and establishing its future direction.

The operational activities of the United Nations agencies had made it possible to strengthen countries' national capacity and the people-centred approach to development, based on the specific characteristics and strategies of each country. The common country assessments and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework had highlighted the need for a more integrated approach to poverty reduction strategies and a greater participation by the population. The views expressed in the report concerning the need to have a comprehensive and people-centred approach to development were well-founded. The cooperation provided by the United Nations had to cover all economic, social, environmental and humanitarian aspects.

Another issue of major importance was the need to give greater support to the Resident Coordinator system and overcome the obstacles to simplification and harmonization of processes and procedures, to promote South-South cooperation, to facilitate triangular cooperation and to incorporate the gender perspective in the operational activities for development.

The resources for the funds and programmes continued to be insufficient. It was essential that the commitments undertaken in Monterrey should be fulfilled, so as to achieve stable and predictable funding which would make it possible to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Tunisia, creator of the Global Solidarity Fund based on the inspiration of its own national experience, urged that it be made operational soon. A high-level committee of eminent persons had been established, charged with managing the Fund and mobilizing the resources needed for it to operate. It was to be hoped that the committee, which would meet for the first time in September 2004, would formulate specific recommendations, draw up a well-defined strategy and obtain new sources of funding for poverty reduction. The work of the committee could be an important input to the General Assembly's review in 2005 of the progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Shikhaliyev (Azerbaijan) said that the report of the Secretary-General presented alarming indications on the situation and the level of development of the majority of the developing countries, offering an opportunity to re-evaluate the reality and attempt to rectify the situation. In that process it was for the United Nations to exercise a steering function through its offices in the different countries and to help Governments to apply the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. It was also extremely important to strengthen the Resident Coordinator system, incorporate the Millennium Development Goals in each country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and harmonize the content thereof with the corresponding UNDAF.

The reform measures undertaken by the Secretary-General to increase the coherence and efficiency of cooperation for development would give better results if they were carried out not only at the country office level but also in the regional headquarters and offices of the relevant agencies. To that end, it would be essential periodically to evaluate the results of the reforms and to communicate the experience acquired both to Governments and to the United Nations agencies.

To date, only UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP had adopted measures to link their programming to the UNDAF process. Azerbaijan considered that if other agencies joined the process that would increase the capacity of the United Nations system as a whole to provide services to the developing countries economically and in a coordinated manner.

The increase in the funding of the core resources of UNDP and UNICEF observed since 2000 was still not sufficient for the United Nations country teams to provide development assistance to the developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the spheres in which they most needed it. In order to ensure the sustainability of the services provided by the United Nations, it was necessary that funding of the United Nations agencies' core resources be predictable, which could be achieved by means of multi-year funding commitments by the donors.

The delegation of Azerbaijan shared the concern expressed by the representative of the United Kingdom on the portion of the core resources that the developing countries actually received. Ensuring that the majority of the agencies' core resources reached the country level and was efficiently utilized was one of the most serious problems. The establishment of a team of experts to which the various United Nations agencies present in a given country and, where appropriate, in neighbouring countries could have recourse would reduce costs and overlap of activities, and in turn would increase the level of implementation and efficiency. Wherever feasible, greater use should be made of the less costly services of qualified local experts. The Government of Azerbaijan, committed to fulfil the undertakings that it had adopted in relation to the Millennium Development Goals, was working together with the United Nations country team. With the assistance of UNDP, it had drawn up and initiated the State Programme for Poverty Reduction and Economic Development and the national strategy on information and communications technologies, had created the office of the Public Defender, and had increased the national capacity for carrying out activities to deal with mines and had undertaken activities for the protection of the environment.

Thanks to the regional programme on the environmental protection of the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan and the other riparian States had drawn up and signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea. The Government was also finalizing a national strategy on biodiversity. In its commitment to develop the non-oil sector of the economy, the Government had recently approved the national programme for socioeconomic development of the regions, through which it was intended to create 600 000 new jobs, and in which the United Nations team in Azerbaijan was playing an active part.

Azerbaijan had been one of the first countries to establish a close link between the UNDAF and its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. In the implementation of the new UNDAF, the Government would have assistance from the United Nations country team to enhance the capacity of the public administration system in order to create an enabling environment for development, poverty reduction, and respect for rights and liberties, as well as to ensure access for the whole population to basic health and education services. In 2002, the Government had contributed around US$ 1 400 000 for the non-core resources of UNDP with the objective of supporting the operational activities and of contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Azerbaijan considered that the orderly integration of all development activities into the framework of a well-directed national development strategy constituted an important step towards the achievement of those goals.

Mr. Rehren (Chile) recognized the efforts deployed by the United Nations system with a view to improving the formulation and implementation of the programmes of operational activities for development. He endorsed the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, but stressed that given its categorization as a medium development country and taking into account its gross domestic product, Chile was excluded from the benefits of a large portion of the programmes of the system. Despite his country's having significantly increased the resources assigned to social programmes for the neediest sectors, there were still serious concentrations of poverty which could be eliminated more rapidly with the assistance of the international cooperation community. Consequently, Chile expressed the fervent hope that the operational activities of the United Nations system would continue supporting the medium development countries.

Mr. Khan (Director of the Office of ECOSOC Support and Cooperation in the Department of

Economic and Social Affairs) said that the debate had made it clear that the Economic and Social Council had a very specific function to fulfil within the general context of the United Nations development cooperation system. The round tables which had been held would have been impossible in other forums and had contributed significantly to clarifying many of the trends and questions which the United Nations was facing in the current climate of change. There was thus no doubt that the Council had fulfilled the role that was expected of it.

The debates had shown that there was wide recognition of the positive advances in the United Nations development system–there was greater coordination and coherence was a clear objective–and of the evident link between continuing the process and the need to promote the mobilization of resources. In particular, it was necessary to guarantee that the core resources were sufficient for the operational activities and were predictable and sustainable in the long term.

In the context of harmonization, simplification and coordination, major advances could be observed, although much still remained to be done. In order for the process to move forward, results had to be clearly visible, which, in turn, would led to a greater mobilization of resources.

After listing the main issues emphasized by delegations, the Director of the Office of ECOSOC Support and Cooperation reflected on the best way in which the General Assembly could give guidance to the United Nations development cooperation system, and urged the delegations to give consideration to how to structure the next triennial policy review relating to the operational activities for development, such that all of the aspects would be covered, but in a more condensed form.

The President said that the Council had thus concluded its examination of item 3 (a) of the agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.